

The Work of Elders: Leading and Healing

Detailed Outline

Part 9 of 9

II. Defining Pastoral Oversight by a Plurality of Qualified Elders

C. New Testament Roles for Pastoral Elders

3. Leading the Church

- a) Sheep have no sense of direction. They get lost very easily and are easily disoriented. The land and water need to be managed for the sheep also.
- b) The New Testament term “shepherd” often means lead and govern. Also words like “overseer” and “oversight” are used.
 - 1) First Timothy 5:17 states the elders take the lead (*prohistemi*). The NIV phrases this as “The elders who direct the affairs of the church.” I prefer this translation to the ESV that speaks of “the elders who rule well.”
 - 2) In Titus 1:7, elders are called “stewards” of the household of God. All of these are leadership terms.
- c) As a body of elders, you lead the church. You go out before the church, and the sheep follow.
 - 1) The single, biggest complaint I hear against church elders is that they are not leading. They are usually good men, they mean well, and they may even teach well. But the church is not going anywhere. They have very little vision, little direction and the same old problems reappear month after month, year after year never being addressed.
 - 2) Poor leadership is very frustrating to the flock. As elders we need to lead diligently and lead well.
 - 3) Leadership is a spiritual gift.

“The one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal [wholeheartedly]...” (Rom. 12:8 ESV)

Among the elders, some of the elders will have the gift of *prohestimi* –they will be natural leaders, able to motivate others and set vision, address problems, confront issues, organize.
- d) Good leadership is good communication.

- 1) Many elders think they are communicating with the congregation, but they aren't. The congregation doesn't know what is going on. You probably aren't communicating as well as you think.
 - 2) Think of creative ways to communicate with the congregation.
- e) Good leadership is setting world vision.
- 1) Christ gave us the Great Commission. We are to be globalists. We have a message for the world.
 - 2) Are you setting a global vision and higher horizons for your people? Or is it the same old thing over and over?
- f) One way to have good management of the church is to have good elders' meetings.
- 1) In fact, I was so concerned about this topic, I wrote the book *Meetings that Work: A Guide to Effective Elders' Meetings*.
 - 2) If your elders' meetings are boring, trivial, and ineffective, that is a sign of what your church will be like. But if your meetings are effective, important issues are being addressed, and time is not being wasted, I can almost guarantee that you will have a well-managed church.
- g) When the Spirit of God is working, there is a freshness of ideas and vision within the leadership body. If this is not in your eldership body, pray that the Spirit will generate it.
- h) Hold people accountable for the ministries entrusted to them and train them to lead ministries.
- 1) As elders, it is not your job to do everything.
 - 2) Ephesians 4:12 makes it very clear that the ministry is the job of everyone.
 - 3) The elders are to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. This is done through teaching and training.
 - 4) If there is no one to run a program, sometimes you need to close them down. Your job is to delegate and equip people, not to run every ministry.
- i) Do not be a passive leader.
- "Passivity is the enemy of leadership." (Neil Glasser)*
- 1) Do not be a minimalist. Be an active, courageous leader.
 - 2) When there are jobs to be done, volunteer.
 - 3) Learn to follow through and to be more organized.
4. Healing and Caring for Practical Needs

Sheep get diseases. Sheep get old. New sheep are born. There are many practical works.

The elders also have many practical duties. They are to be concerned for the needy and the weak and the poor.

a) Caring for the Sick

People are to call you when they are sick and the doctors and medicines aren't working (James 5:14-15). This is a very precious exercise of the eldership, to pray with them, sing with them, counsel them. People are deeply touched by this.

b) Weddings, Pre-marital and Marital Counseling

There are so many problems in families. There is such heartache and pain. Part of the job of elders is to counsel people and comfort them in these painful situations and problems. Counseling is part of being an elder.

c) Funerals

d) Praying for People

e) Helping the Weak

In Acts 20:35, Paul tells the Ephesian elders "We must help the weak." This is a moral imperative. We are to help those who cannot care for themselves or provide for themselves. We want to be a caring, praying church.

Conclusion

Brothers, let us shepherd the flock of God (1 Peter 5:2). So much is at stake. The flock needs your leadership and your teaching. It needs your presence, your model, and your example. Be a prayer warrior and a visionary for your church. People need to see your passion and your excitement about the gospel.

Let me close with Paul's final words to the Ephesian elders:

"And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:32)

It is by the Word that the church is created, that it matures, that it is protected and that it grows and is built up. As elders, be men of the Word, be biblical elders. It is impossible to lead God's people without his Word and the strength of the Holy Spirit. You can never do it alone. You can do it with others, by prayer, and by the knowledge of the things of God.